

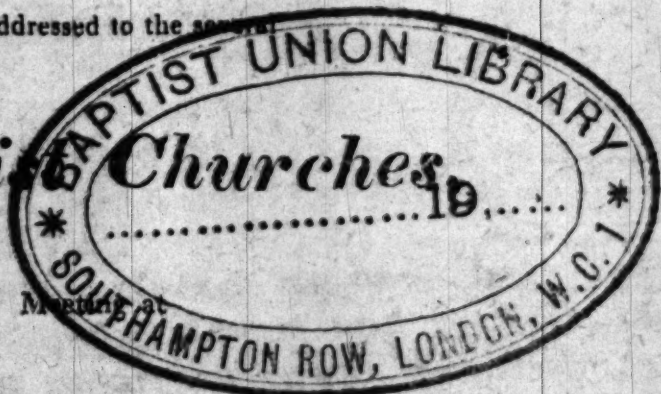
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ON

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST,
A CIRCULAR LETTER,

addressed to the several

Baptist Churches



Ackerington;
Bacup,
Barnoldswick,
Blackburn,
Bradford,
Burslem,
Bramley,
Clough-Fold,
Colne,
Cowling-Hill,

Gildersome,
Halifax,
Hebden-Bridge,
Leeds,
Liverpool, Byrom-street,
Liverpool, Lime-street,
Manchester, York-street,
Masbro'
Ogden,
Pendle-Hill,

Preston,
Rawden,
Rochdale,
Rushworth,
Salendine-nook,
Sheffield,
Sutton, in Craven,
Wainsgate, and
York,

By the Ministers

And Messengers of the said Churches met in Association

AT LEEDS,

May 20th and 21st, 1812.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

DEAR BRETHREN,

THROUGH divine goodness, we have been permitted to come together this year, and we trust the opportunity has been profitable to us. While we rejoice to learn by your letters, that additions have been made to nearly all the churches, we lament that so many have been excluded. May the Shepherd and Bishop of souls restore them; and may their fall lead us to increasing watchfulness and prayer, that we enter not into temptation, and excite us to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart.

Ardently desirous to promote your spiritual welfare, we are led to address you on such subjects as we deem of vast importance; such as we are furnished with from the sacred scriptures; such as the Spirit of God can own for producing a happy effect. Though we think it necessary, at times, to call your attention to subjects of a practical nature, yet we would be careful not to overlook those exceedingly precious doctrines of the gospel, by the faith of which Christians are blessed with a good hope, with peace and consolation, and abound in good fruit to the glory of God. We are persuaded that were your faith in the doctrines and promises of the gospel to fail, you would fail in every part of the Christian life: and that we should in vain address you on the various duties of Christianity, if your hearts were not under the influence of those doc-

trines of divine grace which are the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.

We address you this year on the very important doctrine of *Christ's intercession*; a doctrine which, in our view, is fraught with consolation to all who believe in the Son of God; a doctrine in which the wisdom and grace of God appear in great glory, and which is productive of the most happy effects in all those who receive it by faith. We are persuaded, Brethren, that if this part of the gospel of God's grace be received by you as it is given in the word of the Lord; if you hold it fast as an essential part of the faith once delivered to the Saints, you will derive encreasing peace and comfort from it, and find its influence great, in your growing sanctification, in exciting you to boldness, fervency, and diligence in prayer, and to the active and cheerful discharge of Christian duty.

Believing the Scriptures to be the Word of God, we believe it to be a *fact*, a scripture fact, that Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of men, is in the presence of God in Heaven, engaged in the great work of intercession on behalf of the children of men. The scripture testimony as to this fact is Heb. IX. 24, that Christ has *entered into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.* Heb. VII. 25, that he *ever lives to make intercession for them that come unto God by him.* This is the plain testimony of God upon the subject. Before our Lord left the world, he delivered this gracious promise to his disciples, John XIV. 16, 17, *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth.* As he cannot fail in any promise that he has made to his people, all who believe in him may be assured that he is in Heaven praying to the Father on their behalf. We cannot see Jesus thus engaged in the presence of God, for the place of his glory is not visible to mortal eyes, but, as it is testified by God, who cannot lie, we believe it:—yes, that glorious person whom God chose, in his love to man, to the high office

of Mediator between himself and guilty man; whom he sent into the world in the fulness of time; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; who was born of a virgin; who was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross for the justification of his people; who rose again from the dead, and was exalted to the right hand of his Father; in that state of exaltation we believe he is indeed engaged in the gracious work of intercession with the Father of mercies.

It has not pleased God to inform us in his word of the *particular manner* in which Christ intercedes for his people; whether he prays to the Father for them *in words*, as he did when on earth, or whether in some other manner that infinite wisdom may have determined upon: therefore we would not perplex you with the speculations of men on the subject; but exhort you to be satisfied with what God has in his wisdom revealed; persuaded that it is sufficient to answer all the purposes of his love.

It is necessary, Brethren, that we should next call your attention to the *eminent qualifications* of Christ for the gracious work of intercession. The fact alone is not sufficient for our hope and consolation, we must believe that we have in Christ Jesus, a *suitable* intercessor, one in all respects qualified for the great work: for this is absolutely essential to the prevalency of his intercession.

Jesus Christ is qualified for making intercession with God on our behalf, by virtue of the office he fills, by the appointment of God, as the great High Priest over the house of God. It is in that office he officiates as making intercession. In that office he was typified by the High Priests under the law: like them he offered a sacrifice for sin; like them he appears in the holiest of all with the blood of that sacrifice: but they and their work were shadows of good things to come; Christ is the substance: they and what they did were types; Christ and his offering, and his appearing in the presence of God for us, are the antitypes.

And the substance being come, the shadows are gone, and the substance abides; for Christ is a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedic; possessing an unchangeable priesthood. As our great High Priest appears for us in the presence of the *righteous* God, the just law-giver, on behalf of those who have violated his law, and deserve the awful punishment which his justice threatened against every offender, it is absolutely essential to the success of his intercession, that it should be founded on a satisfaction made to divine justice, for the sins of those whose cause he has undertaken: for though the Son of God himself appears as the intercessor on behalf of the guilty, yet his intercession cannot be heard by the just and holy God, except he plead upon some ground that justice approves as well as mercy. The High Priest under the law was forbidden to appear in the holiest of all without blood which was offered for the sins of the people; for it was the righteous determination of God, that without the shedding of blood there should be no remission: and in vain would the Son of God appear in the presence of God for us, if he appeared without blood: nor would it suffice if he appeared there with the blood of animals as the Jewish high-priest did, for the blood of bulls and of goats cannot take away sin—but he is eminently qualified for intercession on behalf of the guilty, because he appears in the presence of God for them, not with the blood of others, but with his own blood, that blood which he shed by the gracious appointment of God for the sins of his people. The priest himself is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world; ever appearing in heaven as the Lamb that was slain, and whose precious blood was shed for the redemption of the guilty.

And remember, dear Brethren, that the *infinite wisdom* of the Son of God eminently qualifies him also for the work of intercession. He who pleads on behalf of others, should be perfectly acquainted with their state and circumstances, and also with the power of him with

whom he pleads, to relieve and save. Now, the Son of God not only knows perfectly well the guilty and needy condition of sinners, and all that is essential to their salvation, but he possesses also the most perfect knowledge of the Father's purposes of grace, what he can do, what he is willing to do, what he has engaged to do, for the salvation of the objects of his love. In wisdom, as well as in every other divine perfection, he is the equal of the Father, and his intercession, therefore, will not come short of the Father's treasures of grace: and it need not exceed those treasures for they who are interested in the mediation of Christ, need nothing but what the Father is willing to do for them according to his abundant mercy in Christ Jesus. The Son knows that it is the good pleasure of his Father's will to bless his people, in him, with all spiritual blessings, and his intercession is bounded by nothing short of this. The eternal purposes of God's grace, in Christ Jesus, toward his people, and the intercession of Christ on their behalf, differ not in the least degree as to the number and nature of the blessings they comprehend. The infinite wisdom of the Son of God qualifies him for asking of God, on behalf of his people, all things that are included in that covenant of grace in which provision is made for a full and eternal salvation.

Our gracious Mediator is also admirably qualified for intercession, by the *great love* he has for all for whom he appears in the presence of God. The love that led him to undertake their cause, to be humbled to suffer, and to die for their salvation, leads him also to plead their cause with the Father in his state of exaltation. A perfect knowledge only, on the part of an intercessor, would not suffice; for God would have perfectly known our state of need, though he had never loved us and determined on our salvation. An intercessor, in order so to engage in his work as to insure success, must abound in love towards us, must feel the most tender compassion for us, must enter into all the miseries of our condition, and in his great love,

must ardently desire our full deliverance: He must be what the Son of God really is, according to the divine testimony, a merciful High Priest; one who loved his church and gave himself for it; one whose great love for his people is fully manifested in every part of his great work of mediation. And if his love for his people bore him through his work of humiliation, suffering, and dying, on earth, the same love will surely carry him through that part of his mediation in Heaven, from which abasement, pain, and death, are altogether excluded: where all is exaltation, glory, and bliss. If his love did not fail him when he was made a curse for us, surely it will not fail him now, when, for the suffering of death he is crowned with glory and honour.

In considering the qualifications of Christ for the work of intercession, we should ever remember, Brethren, that he appears in the presence of God for us, as the God-man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, in one person; that before he thus appeared in Heaven for us, he dwelt upon Earth, and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin: consequently that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; that having himself suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted; that while he was assaulted by all the powers of earth and hell, he withstood all and remained holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners; and that having engaged in such a conflict, and obtained such a victory, he knows all the succours of grace that his people need in their state of warfare; he sympathizes with them in all their temptations and sufferings, for he was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief.— This qualifies him in a high degree for the office of intercessor on behalf of those whose nature he bore in a state of humiliation, suffering, and strong temptation; whose present state upon earth is the same as his was in the days of his flesh. In this truth there is abundant

consolation for all who in faith and patience are treading in the steps of Jesus.

The word of truth informs us, Heb. VII. 26, *Such an High-Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.* Christ was perfectly *holy* in his nature and life, altogether pure and free from the least taint of sin; he was *harmless* in his disposition and conduct toward men, and not merely harmless, but full of goodness and mercy; he was *undefiled*, he did not contract any defilement of any kind from any source; he was *separate from sinners*; though he dwelt among sinners and conversed with them, yet he had no communion with them in sin, he was not in the least degree conformed to them in sin. Such was Christ, and such an High Priest *became us*: it was necessary that he should possess these qualifications for the priestly office. He who was to make atonement for the sins of others, was, himself, to be without sin, or there could be no value in his sacrifice. If Christ had not been altogether without sin, he would not, in his intercession, have had any acceptable sacrifice to plead before God; neither his offering up of himself, nor his appearing before God as an intercessor, would have been of any avail. But it is our happiness, that in the holy, the spotless Jesus, we have such an High Priest as it *became us* to have, in order to our salvation through his acceptable sacrifice and prevailing intercession.

As every believer in Christ needs his intercession till he is brought to glory, and as the church of God will need it in every period 'till the end of time, it is a truth of unspeakable value, that Christ *ever lives to make intercession* for his people; that he appears in the presence of God for them 'till they are all in the actual possession of their eternal inheritance; that his priesthood is unchangeable; that the nature and efficacy of his intercession change not; that his eminent qualifications as an advocate with the Father are not diminished nor altered by time, but will continue in all

their glory 'till all the purchase of his blood appear in the realms of bliss ; for the Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, that Christ is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedic. Upon this, as well as upon many other most precious and important truths concerning the priesthood of Christ, the apostle dwells, very fully, in his epistle to the Hebrews: shewing, in many respects, the pre-eminence of Christ as the great High-Priest over the house of God: and especially in this one point of exaltation above all the high-priests under the law, his *continuance* in office as the greatest and the last, whom no one shall succeed, but abiding a priest for ever.

The Lord Jesus being so eminently qualified for interceding with God for sinners, the *prevalency* of his intercession is most certain ; he cannot intercede in vain. Being appointed by God himself to the office of High-priest ; having a sacrifice of infinite value to plead ; asking nothing of God but what he can in justice as well as in mercy grant, but what is the good pleasure of his will, and to the glory of his name, to bestow ; abounding in love, in tenderness, and compassion, toward all for whom he pleads ; and being himself perfectly free from all sin ; surely his intercession must prove effectual for all the great and blessed ends for which it was appointed ; must be honoured by God with the most abundant success.

As an interest in the mediation of Christ is essential to salvation, it is a matter of importance, brethren, to consider *who they are for whom Christ intercedes*. As all men are not saved, Christ certainly does not intercede for all, for, if he did, his intercession, in some cases, would prove without effect ; which is what we do not believe of the intercession of the Son of God. When on earth he was praying for his disciples, he said to his Father, *I pray not for the world* : and now, when he appears in the presence of God for men, there is a part of the human race for whom he does not intercede with the Father. His intercession extends to all

who are included in his Father's gift, for when on earth he said to his Father, *I pray for them that thou hast given me.* The Father's gift to Christ are, doubtless, the elect, the predestinated unto life, the chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world; all whom Christ redeemed with his precious blood, for whom he obeyed, suffered and died as their mediator, surety, and substitute. As Christ laid down his life for the sheep, so he intercedes for the sheep: as he loved the Church and gave himself for it, so he ever lives to make intercession for the Church. The Church of Christ is the house of God, and Christ is said to be the High-Priest over that house; consequently the saving benefits of his priesthood are confined to his Church, to that house which is composed only of the ordained unto eternal life. From the word of God we learn that Christ makes intercession for all who come unto God by him, who approach the eternal God, as the Father of mercies, by faith in Christ Jesus, as the way by whom we have access, by one Spirit, to the Father. These, then, are certainly blessed with an interest in Christ's intercession: and all who thus come unto God, who are of the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, who rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh; may take all the comfort of this truth, that Christ ever lives to make intercession for them.

The value of Christ's intercession appears in the *vast benefits* that are obtained by it, for the Church of God. If the interceding grace of the Lord Jesus is essential to the salvation of the Church, if it is a part of the divine plan for the full and eternal salvation of all his chosen, then salvation, spiritual and eternal, is the benefit of Christ's intercession, or, the intercession of Christ is one part of that mediation of Christ, by which sinners are saved. Christ's intercession as the great High-Priest who appears in the presence of God, for his people, with his own blood, obtains for them the gift of the Spirit of God, with all his gracious and pow-

erful influences ; with all the blessings connected with what he works in their hearts. If, as the fruit of Christ's intercession, the Spirit causes them to believe in the name of the Son of God ; through the same intercession is obtained for them, that forgiveness of sins which God has promised to them that believe ; for the Saviour pleads his blood for that end ; that it may be given them, not only to believe on his name, but that, believing, they may be justified freely, by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. When, through the intercession of Christ, the Spirit of God produces faith in the hearts of God's chosen, through the same intercession, they receive that adoption of sons, which is connected with faith in the name of Christ : for, says the apostle, ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. In a word, all the supplies of divine grace they receive ; all the succours of divine grace by which they are saved from the powers of sin, of the world, and of Hell ; all the wonders of divine grace that are wrought on their behalf ; the grace that saves them in this life, that saves them from the sting of death, that delivers them from death and the grave, from death eternal, and that raises them at last to eternal life, is all obtained for them by their advocate with the Father, who is able to save them to the uttermost, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them. We know not, brethren, of any blessing we pray for, according to the will of God, but what he bestows on us through the intercession of our great High-Priest. Heb. IV. 14, 15, 16. It is through him that we enjoy the great benefit of access to God, and praying for the blessings of his mercy and grace : and if we are warranted, in the name of Christ, to pray for all the blessings of God's great salvation, then do all those blessings flow to us through the intercession of Christ. We are informed by an inspired writer that it is because Christ ever lives to make intercession for all who come unto God by him, that he is able to save them to the uttermost.

We would not conclude this address, brethren, without calling your attention to those *effects* that should be produced in us by the faith of Christ's intercession: for what God has been pleased to reveal in his word upon this, as well as upon many other subjects closely connected with it, he has revealed for the purpose of producing great effects in all them that believe: that thereby their spiritual good might be promoted, that they might richly experience the abundant grace of God in Christ Jesus, that they might enjoy their manifold privileges, that they might render to God what is due to him for all the benefits of his great salvation. It is God who works in his people, by his Spirit, both to will and to do of his good pleasure; but the divine Spirit in performing this work of grace, makes use of the doctrines and promises of that word of truth which is spirit and life.

The intercession of Christ is a blessing of such vast magnitude, that if we believe in it, we must experience much love and gratitude to the God of all grace, and to his dear Son, for the inestimable blessing. It is, in truth, a doctrine of divine grace: it is the fruit of the Father's great love; it is fraught with the richest blessings; and the benefits of it shall prove of eternal duration.

Believing the doctrine of Christ's intercession, as it is set before us in the word of truth, we must be influenced to come unto God by him, to approach the throne of his grace with boldness, and there to pour out our hearts before him; adoring his great name, confessing our sins, giving him thanks for his manifold mercies, and imploring all the blessings of his grace for ourselves and for the whole Church of God. Having such an High Priest, who is ever making intercession for us, should we not highly value, and diligently use, the privilege which it obtains for us, of access to God at all times? Would not the neglect of prayer, secret or social, be making light of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the way is ever open for

us to the Father of Mercies ; who is ever before God to present all our sacrifices that are offered to the Father in his name ? There are many considerations that should excite believers to constant and fervent prayer ; and surely the intercession of Christ should be viewed by them as among the most powerful inducements to pray without ceasing : as among the most animating encouragements to draw near to God continually.— This grace of our Lord Jesus Christ should have the most happy influence upon us, in our solemn and delightful seasons of public worship, as well as in our secret approaches to God. The way is open for us to the throne of divine grace ; God is ready, for his dear Son's sake, to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think ; that blood is before the throne that speaks better things than the blood of Abel ; God delights to honor the High-Priest of his own appointment, the sacrifice that was offered by his own command, the intercession that is made as the fruit of his own love. May we not then, without presumption, banish from our souls every fear on the ground of past guilt, or the imperfection of present services ; assured that our iniquities are not remembered against us, and that our spiritual sacrifices will be acceptable unto God by Christ Jesus ? May we not with joyful and thankful hearts, worship the Father of Mercies, having confidence in him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to us, in him, the God of all grace ? As the intercession of Christ insures the acceptance of all who come unto God by him, and a gracious answer to all they ask in his name ; the belief of his intercession should produce in us, strong confidence in God as the hearer of prayer. It is our privilege to be assured, that whatsoever we ask of the Father according to his will, in the name of Christ, he will do it for us. We give glory to Christ, as our intercessor, when we seek all things, and hope for all things, from the Father of Mercies, through the intercession of his beloved Son.

To conclude, may you, dear brethren, abide in the truth as it is in Jesus; contending for the faith once delivered to the Saints: may you grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ: may brotherly love greatly abound among you; and may all the fruits of the Spirit be borne by you: may you, as risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; and when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, may you also appear with him in glory.

Your willing Servants,
for Jesus' sake,

Signed, on behalf of
the whole, by

WM. STEADMAN,
Moderator.

MINUTES.

LEEDS, MAY 20th, 1812.

MET at three in the afternoon—the meeting was introduced by singing, and Brother Birt, of Hull, prayed. Brother Steadman, of Bradford, was chosen Moderator. The letters from the churches were read. Brother Downs, of Sheffield, concluded with prayer.

Met again at half past six. Brother Littlewood, of Rochdale, prayed. Brother Lister, of Lime-street, Liverpool, preached from 1 Tim. 1—11, “The glorious Gospel,” Brother Stephens, of Manchester, read the Circular Letter, on the Intercession of Christ, and concluded in prayer.

Thursday Morning, at seven—met for prayer. Brethren Hyde, Mann, Holroyd, and Tricket, prayed.

Met again at half past ten. Brother Downs prayed. Brother Stephens preached from Prov. 19, 21. “There are many devices in a man’s heart: nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.” Brother Steadman preached from Isaiah 32. 15. “Until the Spirit be

proved upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest," and concluded in prayer.

The following **RESOLUTIONS** were passed :

- 1 *That the Church, meeting in Lime-street, Liverpool, under the pastoral care of Mr. Lister, be received into the Association.*
- 2 *That the Circular Letter be printed.*
- 3 *That the next Association be at Bacup, on Wednesday and Thursday in the Whitsun-week : and that our Brethren Smith, Hargreaves, and Steadman, be requested to preach. In case of failure, Brethren Shuttleworth, Spilting, and Edwards. To put up at the George and Dragon, Bacup.*
- 4 *That the subject of the next Letter be on the Importance of Religious Knowledge ; and that our Brother Lister be requested to draw it up.*

In the Association this Year there were,

Added by Baptism	120	Lost by Death	37
Letter	19	Dismission	15
Restored	2	Exclusion	23
	141		75

Clear Increase——66.

Met again at half past six in the Evening, when Brother Scarlet, of Gildersome, prayed, and Brother Birt preached from Rom. 8, 15, " For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father."